



**Nicola Di Cosmo**

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*Loving War Speaker Series*

**Nicola DiCosmo**  
*Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton*



**"Nomads at War: 'Steppe Terror' in the Mongol and Manchu Conquests"**

**Wednesday, April 6, 2005  
 12:00 p.m.**

**Mershon Center for International Security Studies  
 1501 Neil Avenue  
 Room 120**

[Click here to watch this talk.](#)

*Lunch will be served to those who RSVP to [Ann Powers](#) no later than Friday, April 1, 2005.*

The mounted herdsman of Central Asia have repeatedly formed cavalry armies that destroyed and dominated all enemies. Following in the path of the ancient Xiongnu, Turkish and Uighur empires, the Mongol tribes led by Genghis Khan and his descendants are the best-known example, creating in the thirteenth century the largest land empire this world has ever known. Rooted in the same tradition of nomadic conquest, Timur the Lame created an empire in West Asia; Babur founded the Mughal empire in the sixteenth century; Nurhaci and his descendants (the Qing dynasty) conquered China in the seventeenth century, and Nadir Shah routed the Mughals in the eighteenth century.

**Nicola Di Cosmo**, Ph.D. (1991) Indiana University, has held academic positions at Cambridge, Indiana and Harvard University. He is currently Henry Luce Foundation Professor of East Asian Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton.

His books include *Ancient China and Its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History* (2002), *A Documentary History of Manchu-Mongol Relations (1616-1626)* (2003, with Dalizhabu Bao), *Political Frontiers, Ethnic Boundaries and Human Geographies in Chinese History* (2003, ed. with Don J. Wyatt) *Warfare in Inner Asian History (500-1800)* (2002, ed.), and *Reports from the Northwest: A Selection of Manchu Memorials from Kashgar (1806-1807)* (1993). He has also authored numerous articles.

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This talk is part of a quarter-long series arranged by Geoffrey Parker around the theme of "*Loving War*," and is offered as a graduate seminar (HST 767). The syllabus, including each speaker's recommended readings, is available [here](#).

*About the Series:*

Many cultures today and in the past see war as good and so build up cadres of killers that threaten the security and stability of their neighbors. This asymmetry raises many issues:

- How are such cadres of killers found and trained; what motivates them; to what extent do they draw on tradition and to what extent do they forge their own? That is: do they kill because that is what their culture expects or because it works?
- Do cultures that embrace war as good have any distinctive characteristics?
- To what extent is a warrior culture natural or universal? To what extent do individual societies promote, shape, control and suppress the instinct to "love war"?
- What connects and what divides the warrior's understanding of

fighting as a heroic individual pursuit and the state's conception of war as protective public policy?

- Do all societies understand, observe and enforce that distinction? If not, is the distinction a hallmark of "civilization" or "modernity"?
- What happens when this distinction is not honored?
- Above all, do the killers "just do it" or do they actually enjoy killing?

*Upcoming Events:*

April 6, 2005: *Nicola DiCosmo*  
April 13, 2005: [\*Karl Friday\*](#)  
April 20, 2005: [\*Thomas Kuehne\*](#)  
April 27, 2005: [\*Robert H. Pape\*](#)  
May 4: [\*Eliot Cohen\*](#)  
May 11: [\*Peter A. Fritzsche\*](#)  
May 18, 2005: [\*Barry Strauss\*](#)  
May 25, 2005: [\*N.A.M. Rodger\*](#)